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ABSTRACT

This paper is part of a research project designed to look at questions of giftedness and exceptional ability in the arts through a case study of three world-class artists. Examination of the childhood art of Picasso, Lautrec, and Klee reveals no common subject preferences nor any real anomalies in graphic development. This paper focuses on the social and cultural influences on the artists' lives. Parallels can be drawn between the lives of each of these artists and the three-phase model of social influences on child prodigies proposed by Bloom (1985). In Bloom's model, the first phase is marked by playful learning and an intimate relationship with the first teacher. This phase is followed by more serious, disciplined practice and a switch to a more advanced teacher. High self-motivation and intervention of a master in the field occur during the third phase. Parents and teachers influenced the development of each of these three artists in different ways. Two other sources of social influence considered are the popular and high arts of culture. Each of the artists relied on popular images and popular contemporary styles, such as those found in postcards, calendars, and comic strips, as source materials for their early work. Similarly, each, to varying degrees, was influenced by "high art" cultural traditions. However, the most important social factor influencing the development of these artists was the family. (BN)

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SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON THE CHILDHOOD DRAWINGS OF KLEE, TOULOUSE-LAUTREC AND PICASSO

A paper presented at the
Society for Research in Child Development

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Exceptional Artistic Ability: Social and Cultural Influences on the Childhood Drawings of Klee, Toulouse-Lautrec and Picasso

This paper is part of a research project optimistically designed to describe and identify what, if any, are the special or unusual qualities of childhood drawings by three world-class artists. To date, the project has examined two topics: 1) the kinds of themes which were of interest to the 3 artists and 2) the graphic-developmental stages through which the artists passed. (Pariser, 1985,1986). The general thrust of the research is to look at questions of giftedness and exceptional ability in the arts through a case-study method. This method, as opposed to the psycho-metric approach is championed by Gruber (1982) and Feldman (1982). As Gruber puts it:

> If we want to know how people become extraordinary adults, we can start with some of the latter (and) find out how they do whatever it is we find extraordinary about them...if we could understand an adult who has led a creative life, we might then work backwards to ask how this promising young adult organized his or her life as a whole so as to remain a self-actualizing creative person. (p. 15)

Feldman makes essentially the same point as Gruber and calls for a concerted research effort which will look directly at gifted individuals:

> The psychometric tradition - the bastion of creativity research - has produced two sets of instruments that, while extensively utilized by researchers, ultimately have been most disappointing in their ability to identify those talented individuals who express their abilities in highly creative and productive careers. Just as these tests have failed to fulfill their predictive promise, they have contributed little to our understanding of the emergence and development of unusual abilities. With a growing societal commitment to the nurturance and education of gifted and talented individuals, the virtual vacuum of research concerning the development of giftedness is tragic. (p. 33)

Klee, Lautrec and Picasso were selected for a number of reasons: each has achieved great stature. As children, all three exhibited significant interest and ability in the visual arts. Each was a gifted draughtsman, concerned with problems related to rendering and the use of line. (Therefore, childhood drawings are particularly relevant to mature work.) Lastly, each artist has left

a sizeable archive of childhood work. It is my intention in this presentation, to briefly answer the two questions posed at the outset and then move on to the issue of the social and cultural context of development. Thus, once we have considered the question of thematic preference in graphic development, and the issue of stages in drawing, we will examine the impact of family and culture.

1) Thematic preferences: What did the 3 artists like to draw?

There are significant differences in childhood themes for all 3 artists. Drawings from a variety of sources; archives, catalogues, private collections were examined and organized into four categories: 1) Figure drawings (studies from life and imagination); 2) Caricatures, grotesques; 3) Drawings of animals with or without people including bullfights, horse races, etc., and 3) Landscape, seascapes, architecture (see figure 1).

Of Klee's total output, 75% of his drawings consisted of landscape and architectural objects. The remainder of his drawings were divided between studies of animals and people. (A study by Verdi (1984) places considerable emphasis on the significance of these early nature studies. Klee's mature work reflects his continuing passionate interest in the natural world - an interest which can be traced back to his earliest sketches at age five and six.) Roughly two-thirds of Lautrec's juvenile work consists of drawings related to animals and to figure studies. Again, this trend agrees with his mature interest in capturing action and gesture. The only significant shift in subject matter is that after age 18 the frequency with which Lautrec drew horses, declined. In the case of Picasso, almost 75% of his juvenile drawings consists of figure studies; the remainder are almost all studies of spectacles such as bullfights, street scenes, etc. This also agrees with his choice of mature subject matter. In the broadest sense, the themes which were of interest to the mature artists announced

themselves clearly in their juvenile work.

2) Graphic Development: Was there anything special about how the 3 artists acquired drawing mastery?

No real anomalies in graphic development have been observed even though accelerated development does seem to be present in the case of Picasso and Lautrec. Although there has been plenty of debate on the utility of stage theory in psychology in general and in artistic development in particular[1], this author remains convinced of the utility of the concept of stages. It can be shown that all 3 artists acquired the basic skills, techniques, and structures of graphic competence in the same sequence as other, less exceptional children. This is to say that Picasso, Klee and Lautrec all started out scribbling and making simple schematic forms before they began to draw using an integrated outline. The work of Heidi (Fein, 1976) illustrates this "normal" stage-bound progression quite nicely. Looking briefly at this sequence of drawings (slide #1), we see how this young girl, whose drawings were collected by her mother, started out scribbling and then moved through a series of stages to a more and more flexible and articulated representation of her favorite animal, the horse. None of the 3 artists studied violated the kind of normative order suggested by Heidi's development. Cases of anomalous graphic development do exist; for example, the work of an autistic girl, Nadia (Self, 1977, Pariser, 1981) who, at the age of 4, suddenly began to draw with a sophistication rarely seen in adults. Two slides show examples of drawing development which is truly anomalous. The drawings of horses (slides #3,4) done at age 3.8 are exceptional; they are integrated and remarkably detailed renderings. Slide #5 shows an equally exceptional drawing for a 6 year old child - it is a study drawn from life and is remarkably

[1] Wilson and Wilson, 1981, Alland, 1983

sensitive to surface detail. What makes Nadia's work so unusual is that there is no evidence of any earlier, less elaborate attempts at graphic representation such as we find in Heidi's chronological record. Nadia demonstrates the anomalous, sudden appearance of a highly specialized rendering capacity which even Picasso cannot rival. Of course, Picasso is quoted as saying that, "When I was a child, I drew like Raphael; it has taken me all my life to draw like a child." (p.) This statement, in my view, is an impish claim, unsubstantiated by the drawing record Picasso left behind. Drawings of a most un-Raphael-like quality do exist which suggest that Picasso acquired graphic skills in a sequence if not a tempo comparable to that demonstrated by Heidi. (slide #6). Observe, for example, this drawing of Hercules. It is based on a statue and is a remarkable drawing for a 9 year old, but it is still a far cry from the elegance of Nadia's work at 6 years of age. The graphic skills of all 3 artists did not burst, fully formed, from their infant hands, as was the case with the autistic child, Nadia.

So much for the psychological dimensions of graphic development and thematic choice. In this paper, we will look at the complement of the psychological dimension, namely the social sphere. Three areas which constitute what this author considers "cultural influences" will be discussed: 1) family and teachers; 2) popular art, and 3) "high" art.

First, we need to set a methodological and theoretical context for "cultural influences". The work of Feldman (1985) and Bloom (1985) provides us with such a context. Feldman looked at the life histories of 6 child prodigies. He attempted to unravel the many strands which connect the innate powers of the child prodigy with the social world he/she inhabits. He debunks the myth that "genius will out". Instead, Feldman insists on the delicate relationship between

abilities and the social circumstances which permit the expression of those abilities:

> One of the myths about prodigies is that their talents are so overwhelming that they will be fulfilled regardless of what happens in their environment. My experience with prodigies makes it clear that precisely the opposite is true. The more powerful and specific the gift, the more the need for active, sustained, specialized intervention from those who are responsible for the child's development. (p. 123)

Feldman amply documents the extent to which the family and the immediate community are indispensable in drawing out, nurturing and challenging the child's gifts. Second only to family are the child's teachers and tutors who, from the start, play a critical role in the development of special abilities. Bloom (1985) has added to Feldman's insights by studying the impact of teachers and tutors on the development of talented individuals.

Bloom studied 120 talented individuals in the fields of piano, sculpture, neurological research, swimming, tennis and mathematics. He, like Feldman, observes what a powerful influence teachers exert on the expression of talent. Bloom's study outlines the stages through which specially gifted individuals come to master a discipline. Sosniak (in Bloom, 1985) summarizes the three stages of the learning process as it exists for talented pianists:

> The first phase of play and romance is a period during which there is an enormous encouragement of interest and involvement, stimulation, freedom to explore and immediate rewards. The second phase, of precision and discipline, is a period during which skill, technique, and the habit of accuracy are dominant. The third phase of generalization and integration is a period during which the development of individuality and insight, and the realization that music can be a significant part of one's life, come to the fore. (p. 343)

This outline may be a useful developmental sketch for learning in other artistic fields such as the visual arts. Sosniak cautions moreover that, "The phases are not innately determined, nor do they arise from the subject matter of lessons or the curricula for a course of study. They emerge from the interaction of the

learner, the teacher and some subject matter in the doing or the act of learning." (p. 343) Parallel to these shifts in the learning climate, i.e. the change from 1) romance with the subject; 2) discipline and technique to 3) the development of individuality, insight and generalization, there are shifts in the sorts of teachers most appropriate to each phase. Bloom characterizes the teachers who work with children during the first phase of talent development as, "...good with people, fond of children, but not particularly distinguished in the discipline." (p. 479) His study shows that such human warmth is the most important aspect of the child's initial contact with the discipline. For example, the nature of such initial student-teacher relationships was described as a form of "extended family", i.e. the child's first teacher was a "second mother" to them. (p. 479)

Social Influences: Teachers: The First Phase of Learning (Play and Learning)

Consonant with Bloom's observations, Klee, Lautrec and Picasso all had intimate, family-like relationships with their first teachers: in Klee's case his first inspiration came from his grandmother. For Lautrec, Renée Princeteau became a close friend as well as his first tutor. In Picasso's case, his first teacher was his father. Let us start with Picasso: Don José Ruiz Blasco served as Picasso's primary artistic resource from the age of 9 until about the age of 15. This relation between conservative, academic father, and iconoclast son, is notorious in art historical circles because, as we know, the son ultimately revolted against everything the father stood for. While Picasso was in late childhood and early adolescence, Don José was all things to his gifted son - tutor, model and patron. (see Glaesemer, 1984). Don José instructed his son in various classical painting and drawing techniques. As the father was an inveterate painter of pigeons (see slide #7), Don José instructed his young son

in the creation of similar pictures (slide #8). This slide shows one of Pablo's earliest pigeon paintings done at age 14. In addition to this painting there are numerous sketches and doodles of pigeons all from the same period in Picasso's life. These are from a sketchbook when Picasso was 14 years (slide #9), and these are from the margins of a textbook (slide #10). As a model, Don José was the subject of many portrait studies. (slide #11). All these studies of Don José were done when Picasso was 15, and reveal to varying degrees, the melancholy and refined features of his father. In his early 20's, Picasso seems to have turned against his father, as he turned against the academic tradition for which Don José stood. Picasso ceased to sign his canvasses with his father's name "Ruiz" and only let his mother's maiden name "Picasso" stand. This is indeed rich grist for psychoanalytic mills. Through Don José's intervention, Pablo was able to study under teachers in several art academies - in Corunna, Barcelona and Madrid. So, thanks to his own natural talents and his father's efforts, Pablo Picasso was eventually exposed to other teachers, but his most significant teacher was surely Don José Ruiz Blasco.

Lautrec's family encouraged him through their example, to draw and paint. The whole family consisted of artistic amateurs, particularly his uncles who regularly drew and sculpted. Much emphasis was also placed on the skills of "the gentleman". Among these were the abilities and judgment of a horseman. Thus, Lautrec was trained early to engage in the arts as a pastime, and to observe and comment upon horses. He developed a minute eye for equine anatomy and movement. It is no surprise, therefore, that his first teacher was Renée Princeteau, a professional painter of pedigreed horses. But Princeteau was clearly more than just a tutor; he was Lautrec's companion. He shared the family's love of horses and would accompany Lautrec to racing events and to animal shows. Lautrec's

enthusiasm and gift for drawing horses emerges in his studies of horses and carriages at age 7. (see slide #11 and 12). Lautrec's later work in his school book margins continues his fascination with the horse. (slide #13). These drawings, from among many, were done at age 11 while Lautrec was still a student of Princeteau's. Eventually, Princeteau urged Lautrec to seek the tutelage of more demanding academic painters in Paris.

Klee's immediate family did not support his interest in the visual arts, but his grandmother, who illustrated fairy tales, encouraged the young boy to draw. Klee's grandmother died when he was 6, leaving him, in his own words, "an artistic orphan".

Thus Klee, among the three artists, was the least encouraged and supported by his family in his pursuit of the visual arts. However, for Klee and Lautrec, there do exist drawings from the earliest period - the time when playfulness and exploration are most characteristic of the child's interaction with the medium. This drawing of "a lady, a chair, and a monster" by Klee, aged 5, (slide #14), demonstrates his playful approach. Likewise, Lautrec's drawings of horses and birds, done at age 7, are equally playful and exploratory. Unlike the childish drawings of Klee and Lautrec, Picasso's earliest work has not been preserved. Perhaps this is because his father was so preoccupied with standard ideas of academic drawing that childish scribbles and simple sketches were of no interest to Don José.

Social Influences: Teachers: The Second Phase of Learning

According to Bloom, the second phase in the development of talented youngsters is a period during which,

> "skill, technique and the habit of accuracy are dominant. The shift from romance and play to the more sober pursuit of technical competence

> is often signalled by the switch from the beginning teacher to a more advanced instructor. With a new instructor, lessons are more difficult and intense. Practice is longer and more arduous. The new teachers who work with talented children during the second phase do not need to be as 'supportive' or empathetic as those in the first phase. The instructors sought at this level are those who have the technical expertise, knowledge, and the 'connections' necessary to expand the child's educational opportunities in the talent field. (p. 640)

Here again, we can find parallels in the lives of our three artists. All three artists subjected themselves to the demanding and wearisome exercises of academic painting and drawing. All 3 were expected to copy from tedious arrays of plaster casts and to do endless studies of the nude figure. All 3 artists seemed, at a certain point in their development, to gravitate towards a slogging kind of training. During his adolescence, working alone, Klee produced quantities of labored copies of calendar tear sheets (see slides #15, 16), and he worked also from books with images designed specially for copying; for example, this study of a cow (slide #17). Also, while in his teens, Klee made studies from life, or landscapes (slide #18), and city scapes (slide #19). None of this material proved to be of much interest or value to Klee when he later considered his own graphic development. In fact, Klee incorporated into his mature oeuvre only his very earliest childhood works, such as the "Lady with Parasol" (slide #20) which for him, embodied the aesthetic he valued as a mature artist.

Picasso and Lautrec also passed through the second phase of mastery learning under the tutelage of academic teachers. Both artists produced drawings and studies in their teenage years which reveal a firm grasp of academic drawing principles; for example, here are figure studies by Lautrec (slide #21), done while he attended the atelier of Bonnat in Paris, and here are charcoal plaster cast studies by Picasso, (slides #22, 23) done in Barcelona while he took classes in art academy. Both Toulouse-Lautrec and Picasso appear to have relished the challenge of this sort of work.

O'Brian (1976) detects a virtuoso's delight in the charcoal and crayon studies Picasso executed: "his art studies glow with pleasure, controlled, disciplined and almost anonymous, but certainly pleasure." (p. 36) Lautrec was explicit about the pleasure he found in the grinding work of academic studies. When he was in Paris he regretted the fact that his second academic teacher, Cormon, was more easily satisfied than his first, Bonnat: "My former master's (Bonnat) raps put ginger into one - and I didn't spare myself. Here I feel rather relaxed and find it an effort to make a conscientious drawing when something not quite as good would do as well in Cormon's eyes." (Lautrec, quoted in Mack (1942, p. 56) Lautrec wanted and enjoyed the most demanding standards. It is as though Picasso and Lautrec, like star athletes, sought out the most extreme tests of their abilities. Klee did not submit himself to the rigors of academic drawing until his 20's. Still, if one looks at Klee's adolescent landscape and architectural drawings, one sees the same affinity for labor and struggle even if one does not find the facility of Lautrec or Picasso.

Social Influences: Teachers: The Third Phase of Learning: Autonomy

The third phase of the talent training process described by Bloom is marked by the intervention of a third sort of teacher, the master/teacher. Such a teacher is not merely a task-master, he/she is extremely conversant with the discipline and is aware of the most recent developments in the field. Master/teachers are, however, only a part of the story. It is the individual him or herself who must now assume the primary responsibility for "pushing, driving, and motivating themselves. They have to make the talent field their own." (p. 469) Parents no longer figure as central characters in the drama; the talented individuals themselves begin to take on more responsibility for the development of their careers. Here again the outlines suggested by Bloom are

consonant with the available facts relating to the final stages of Klee's, Lautrec's, and Picasso's apprentice years. Klee took matters firmly into his own hands by leaving Bern and his musical career. That Klee had considerable musical talent is beyond debate. By the age of 11, he had been offered the post of substitute violinist in the municipal orchestra of Bern. (Grohmann, 1954, p. 29) Thus, in leaving music and Bern, he decided not to become a professional musician. Klee moved to Munich in 1898. At this time Munich was a tremendously active center for the arts. Klee studied with two academic painters, Stuck, and then Knirr. Knirr was firmly convinced that Klee had the potential for great contributions in the arts. (Grohmann, p. 30)

Between the ages of 18 and 20, Lautrec studied in the Paris ateliers of two conventional academic painters, Cormon and Bonnat. It would seem that Lautrec had a certain amused contempt for the academic painting style so dear to his masters. There is evidence for this in the form of a satirical painting which Lautrec executed. It is a parody of an extremely saccharine painting by one of the noted Parisian academics, Puvis-de-Chavannes. In the Puvis-de-Chavannes canvas, nymphs and scantily, draped girls decorate a "sacred grove" (slide 24). In Lautrec's skillful parody, the painting style and smooth finish are preserved as are a number of the female ornaments. (slide #25); however, the sacred grove has been invaded by a group of scruffy Montmartre gentlemen. Lautrec appears among these intruders, with his back to the viewer. It is clear from Lautrec's stance that he is urinating in the "sacred grove". Lautrec did acknowledge two serious painters as inspirational (Degas and Forain) but he studied with neither. (slides #26, 27). These two may have served in some capacity as "masters".

Picasso in his 20th year moved to Paris where, with phenomenal ease he

absorbed the styles of many post-impressionist masters. At age 20, he painted this Bonnard-like image, (slide #28) and this Toulouse-Lautrec Knock off (slide #29). As I mentioned earlier, it is a hard task to decide who, if anyone, served as a master-teacher for the young Picasso. He had overthrown his father and no single figure seems to have replaced Don José.

To sum up - the influence of family and teachers on Klee, Toulouse-Lautrec and Picasso covers a wide spectrum. In Picasso's case, his family was totally committed to seeing little Pablo develop as a first-rate academic artist. Which is to say that Picasso's father made a most determined effort to provide his son with the best academic training he could muster. Picasso's situation most closely resembles the case of the prodigies described by Feldman (1985) - where the whole family was focussed on developing the child's prodigious talents. This heady and enriched home environment, combined with Picasso's phenomenal powers of rendering meant that, by the age of 15 or 16, Picasso had finished his apprenticeship in classical artistic methods. He could create and control volume with ease, (see slide #30) - as this study of a plaster foot shows. He could also paint in a flawless academic manner, as this competition piece also shows. (slide #31). Called First Communion, it was painted at Pablo's father's urging and shows Don José as the proud father and Pablo's sister as the communicant. Barely ten years after painting this thoroughly conventional work, Picasso was to create a seminal piece of modernity, Les Demoiselles d'Avignon (slide #32), which subverts the sum total of what Pablo learned so well at his father's knee.

Lautrec's family and particularly his mother, supported his artistic efforts. As wealthy land owners there was no need to equip the boy with tools for survival (as was the case with Picasso). Lautrec was encouraged to study horses and draw them as an activity consonant with genteel pursuits. A family

member did not serve as his first teacher, but he did have a close relationship with the man who first tutored him in drawing. Unlike Picasso, Lautrec went on from his initial teacher (Princeteau) to other more demanding instructors, Bonnat and Cormon.

Klee was virtually self-taught. Until the age of 19 he had made his principle investment in musical learning. Thus, in Klee's case, by age 19 he had only begun the second of the three learning stages identified by Bloom – the period of disciplined study. Apprenticeship to a master was what awaited him in Munich.

We have considered the impact of family and teachers. What about the influence of "high" and "low" artistic culture itself? (By high artistic culture I mean the works and styles associated with well-regarded European artists such as Rembrandt, Goya, Velasquez, Ingres. By "low" culture I refer to "popular" art forms such as comic strips, caricatures and popular illustrations.) In the case of all 3 artists, images from "high" and "low" artistic culture served as models for learning skills and techniques.

Social Influences: The Impact of the Popular Arts

As Klee was essentially a self-taught artist, it is not surprising that he utilized many popular sources of imagery – such as illustrated calendars (as we have seen) and comic strip images. As early as five 5 years of age, Klee copied images from a French comic strip (slide #33). This picture shows grateful pets bringing gifts to their owner. In his high school textbooks and notebooks, one can find further traces of "popular culture" –figures from comic strips such as a pair of troublesome boys, Max and Moritz appear in the margins (slide #34). Also, the ubiquitous "art nouveau" or Jugendstil manner is plainly apparent.

(slide #35) Haxthausen (1982) describes the style of Klee's adolescent doodles as follows: "...these fanciful creations are characterized by a pronounced two-dimensionality, a predilection for profile, curvilinear silhouette images, and a strong decorative sense: (p. 14). In this slide showing Isaac blessing Esau (slide #36), we can plainly see the impact of the popular style. It is worth noting that Picasso, who passed through late adolescence at about the same time as Klee, also produced drawings and sketches in the "art nouveau" style, except that in Barcelona, the style was referred to as "Modernismo" (slide #37).

Picasso and Lautrec freely used images from popular culture. A striking example of Picasso's adolescent fascination with a popular image, is his copy of a Gibson postcard - or something very much like it. (slide #38). In the Spanish textbook which Picasso used in school, there is little marginal sketch on p. 59 (slide #39). The sketch shows what at first appears to be a woman seated in front of a mirror. If one looks at the composition as a whole, one can see the image change into a skull with the woman and her reflection functioning as the eye sockets. This "trick image" appears on the Gibson postcard printed in Germany in 1908. The Picasso sketch antedates the postcard, but it seems likely that Picasso saw a similar card and was intrigued by its morbid and ambiguous imagery.

Many contemporary researchers in the field of child art have noted the affinity which young adolescents have for comic strip and comic strip formats. (Wilson & Wilson, 1982, Duncum, 1983, Smith, 1983). As an adolescent Picasso was no exception. At the age of 10, (1891) Picasso left his natal home in Malaga to settle in Corunna where his father accepted a teaching post in a local art academy. Picasso stayed in touch with his southern relatives by sending them a journal which told them of life in the rainy and inhospitable north of Spain.

His satirical reportage was modelled on the style of illustrated journals and popular Spanish cartoons called "Alleluya's". His journal called Azul y Blanco - (Blue and White) contains satirical sketches, jokes and reportage. (slide #40)

Scattered throughout the collection of Lautrec's childhood work are eight drawings which, by their style and content, are clearly derived from Grandville. (slide #41). Grandville's real name was Jean Ignace Isidore Gerard (1803-1847). His fantastic drawings show human figures in 19th century garb, sporting animal heads. His work enjoyed great success and had considerable influence on other illustrators, most notably, Tenniel, the illustrator of the Alice books. From the drawings reproduced in the most important Lautrec catalogue, it seems that Lautrec returned occasionally to Grandville's fantasies. Slides #42, 43 show two examples of these animal-headed people with meticulously drawn clothing and accoutrements.

In the case of three Lautrec studies, it is clear that he was working hard to copy or develop a Grandville-like image. Lautrec, at age 11 or so, drew a riverbank scene where a duck-headed creature pulls another half human creature, crowned with a rabbit's head, across the stream in a bird's nest. (slides 44 , and 45). There exists a Grandville illustration in the collection by Adhemar (1975), which shows a duck pulling a hare across a river in a bird's nest. The picture is title: "Hare and the Wild Duck", (p. 776), and this may also be the title of a French fable. (slide #46). Lautrec's figures are typical Grandville personages, and their position in the near foreground is very similar to Grandville's hare and duck arrangement. Perhaps the illustrator's grotesque figures struck a resonant chord with the young Lautrec, for in his maturity, burlesque images held a certain attraction for him.

To sum up: like teenagers everywhere the 3 artists in question were quite

eclectic in their use of source material. They relied on popular images and popular contemporary styles. Klee copied banal illustrations for the purpose of mastering basic rendering techniques. He worked from easily available pictures as a way of learning to represent volume, texture, depth and geometrical construction. Picasso and Lautrec got most of their "serious" technical information directly from their tutors. These two artists turned to popular imagery as a source of diversion and entertainment. Picasso and Lautrec used the equivalent of modern-day comic strip formats for communicating with distant family and friends.

Social Influences: The Impact of "High Culture"

Now, what of "high culture" and its impact on the development of the three artists? This question can be dispensed with easily. As we have seen, Picasso was, from an early age, exposed by Don José to what Don José considered "the best" in the tradition of Spanish and European painting. At age 14, Picasso visited Madrid and the Prado. Later, he copied a number of old masters - among them Velasquez (slide #47), Goya (slide #48), and even El Greco. (slide #49). (Interestingly enough, Don José, ever the conservative, was not pleased that his son devoted any time to the eccentric work of El Greco.) At 19, in Paris, Picasso copied modern masters with uncanny facility; in fact, he did not copy canvasses, he simply adopted the styles of Bonnard or Lautrec. In his later years, Picasso returned to the great painters whom he studied in his youth. For example, there is the much heralded series of studies of Velasquez Las Menias (done in 1957), when Picasso was 76. He had first seen the Velasquez in the Prado at the age of 14 when he had passed through Madrid with his father. (Penrose, 1981, p. 419)

For Lautrec, his exposure to the "great traditions" of European painting was relatively limited under the tutorship of Princeteau. It was not until he went to Paris that he was exposed with any intensity to the work of serious artists. Around 1880, when Lautrec was 16 years old, he met Louis Forain, in Princeteau's Paris studio. Forain was one of the pre-eminent French draughtsmen (slide #50) Mack (1938) describes Forain as, "...one of the greatest caricaturists of his day." His "gift for suggesting the essential character of his figures without a single superfluous line opened Lautrec's eyes to the great virtues of economy." (pp. 48-49) Generally speaking, there is not much evidence that Lautrec studied the masters of European painting as intensively as the young Picasso. One is led to this conclusion by comparing the number of copies of "old masters" to be found in each artist's childhood and adolescent work. Lautrec learned (but did not value) the formal aesthetic of the academic tradition, by working in the ateliers of his teachers, Bonnat and Cormon. One other "high art" tradition had an impact on Lautrec: " In 1883, when Lautrec was 19, he attended an exhibition of Japanese prints at the Georges Petit Gallery. He was much impressed by the colour and vital yet delicate line of the prints." (Mack, 1938, p. 59) The connections between Japanese prints and Lautrec's mature work are abundantly clear. Of contemporary French artists, Degas was Lautrec's favorite. (In fact, he once included the viewing of a Degas canvas as a fitting dessert for his guests at a sumptuous dinner. (Huysman & Dortu, 1964).

There is scant evidence in the form of studies, copies or sketches to demonstrate that in childhood Klee studied European masters. As an adolescent he was impressed by the romantic landscapes of the popular Swiss painter, Arnold Bocklin. (slide #51). In his twenties, Klee admired and emulated the paintings of another contemporary Swiss painter, Ferdinand Hodler. Klee's figure studies

and etchings from this period owe a great deal to Hodler's muscular and awkwardly posed nudes. (slide #52). Haxthausen (1982) refers to Klee's nudes as"...emaciated exaggerations of the Hodlerian type." (p. 181) (slide #) If one considers the work of the mature Klee, one readily sees how little his mature, spare, abstract style owes to these early influences. (slide #54). All in all, it makes sense that someone like Klee, who ultimately generated his art by turning inwards to his own mental processes, and backwards to the very earliest of his childhood works, should have had little systematic commerce with "high" European art. As with Lautrec, Klee's first systematic exposure to the traditions and values of "high art" must have come in his years of academic apprenticeship.

Without a doubt, the most important social factor impinging on the development of these three singularly gifted artists, was the family. True to Feldman's vision (1986) of the importance of the family milieu on the development of prodigies, the families of the three artists were the conduits which regulated the flow of artistic nourishment. Each family provided a markedly different sort of environment: where Don Ruiz Blasco struggled to give his son the best possible training and grounding in artistic knowledge, Klee's family actively dissuaded their son from pursuing his interest in the visual arts. The attitude of the Lautrec family lies somewhere between these two extremes. Lautrec's mother had principle charge of her son's education and welfare (Lautrec's father was an eccentric and high-living gentleman who was estranged from son and mother.) Resources were made available to Lautrec, but he was never pushed.

To speculate for a moment, if one can put to the side issues like "native ability", social class, longevity, and other significant differences among the three artists, it is interesting to look at the relationship between family

support and the degree of breadth each artist achieved. There seems to be a linear relationship - the more training and pushing, the greater the breadth of the work. The most pre-eminently successful artist of the trio, Picasso, was a prolific mold-breaker. He was the beneficiary of a tailor-made system of tutelage. Don José intended to create a significant academic artist and he succeeded beyond wildest expectations. Lautrec, although gifted as few draughtsmen have been, was not as much a mold-breaker as Picasso. Lautrec has bequeathed us essentially a single, lyrical, bold approach to imagery. The one sort of thing which he chose to do, he did extraordinarily well, but his inventiveness and stylistic variety lag far behind Picasso's. Lautrec was "indulged", never pushed (except by himself) and thus, perhaps, he was prepared to "coast" on his formidable gifts. Lastly, there is Klee who, like Lautrec, had essentially one mature style. As a mature artist, he explored a finite metaphysical territory. One might argue that, as Klee's family actively dissuaded him from following his artistic career, he ultimately evolved a style which was idiosyncratic, hermetic and one might even say, "defended". His titles, for example, although always poetic, rarely clarify issues for the viewer. The foregoing "explanation" of the causal connections between family ambitions and artistic success, is of course pure speculation, but it does at least suggest some ways of making sense out of the different patterns we have noted.

And what of the larger questions posed at the outset of the paper? Where can we look for some sort of a key to the mystery of significant artistic giftedness? The answer does not lie exclusively in understanding and analyzing descriptions of graphic development, thematic choices, or even the impact of family and cultural forces. The answer may lie with understanding all of the

above-mentioned elements, and one more - namely the relationship between the works which these young artists did for their teachers or mentors, and the works which they did for themselves. In closing, and by way of illustration, let me show you a series of drawings by Lautrec. They are taken from the pages of his Latin-French Dictionary. Done at age 11, these sketches give us a glimpse of something, which one can only call with the benefit of hindsight, the "real Lautrec": the drawings are witty, lively, admirably executed and effortlessly correct. They also demonstrate one of Lautrec's special gifts - his ability to coordinate the image with the text. Lautrec plays with the line which divides two columns of print. (slide #55). On page 391, he turns the page divider into a whip. Then, on pages 437, 456, 458 and 464, the line becomes a balancing pole used by diminutive gymnasts. (slides #56-#67). Lautrec frequented circuses and animal shows, and these dictionary sketches are perhaps based on the recollection of a recent experience. They hint at Lautrec's mature talent for gesture, movement and witty economy.

It may be that in the margins of notebooks and in the private corners of sketchbooks, we may be able to find the first stirrings of the special qualities which are manifest in the mature work. In fact, one art historian, Staaler (1987) has proposed exactly this argument. She claims that in the early drawings of Picasso we can find the seeds of cubism. This sort of claim, no matter how shaky in terms of verifiability, suggests a possible route for examining the germs of each artist's specialness. That is, perhaps the place where each of these three artists reveal the most about their potential development is in their unguarded, playful doodles and private sketches.

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